CONFERENCE connection
Alabama · Georgia
Mississippi · South Carolina · Tennessee · NW Florida
SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

April 1, 2021

Leaning into Newness with Hope

Grace to you and peace! Like many other things, the journey through Holy Week feels different this year. As we recall the scriptures sharing stories and emotions of fear, confusion, betrayal, and despair, they also lead us to a sense of hope, joy, wonderment, and the birth of something new. We have been living with the Holy Week feelings for a year and now there is a sense of hope and wonderment as we consider the life of our congregations moving forward.

It has been suggested that both pastors and congregations approach the months ahead as if they were a "New Church Start." It is not a matter of going back to what was, but rather moving into what can be. We are not the same people we were a year ago.

When a pastor begins a new ministry, they are encouraged to ask a lot of questions and do a lot of listening to where people are and what they need. They are encouraged to focus on relationships rather than on any "to-do list". As we move ahead, this will mean listening to the stories of grief and anxiety, but also realizing that people's thinking and focus may have changed from a year ago.

At the same time, members of congregations are encouraged to see the plans for returning to in-person worship as beginning a new ministry with one who has been called to lead. It is like a new chapter in the mission and ministry of the church. There is excitement and expectation. But it is also a time to wonder and envision. You are encouraged to take time to listen and reconnect with other members of the congregation – we have all changed.

Take time to celebrate, while honoring the trauma of the past year.

As we approach the celebration of the resurrection, there is great joy! But we also remember that the resurrection experience of the disciples also included confusion, wonderment, and uncertainty. They were no longer who they had been. They were beginning a new chapter with all the excitement and uncertainty it would bring.

May the journey through Holy Week and the joy of Easter, bring you to celebrate the resurrection of new possibilities within your life and the life of your local church!

Blessings, Char Burch

News from the Conference Office

Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

- **Monday, April 26, 7 pm Eastern/6 pm Central**
  With more people being vaccinated and some churches making plans for outdoor services, questions are being asked about how soon churches might return to in-person worship and what current practices need to be maintained into the future. We invite all Moderators, Church Leaders, and Clergy to be part of the conversation. REGISTER

Clergy Zoom Connections for April

- **An Hour of Conversations and Prayer**
  Tuesday, April 6, 13, 20, 27 - 11:00 a.m. Eastern (10:00 a.m. Central); Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/479440102
- **Live Harp Meditations for Ministers**
  Thursday, April 15 - 12:00 p.m. Eastern (11:00 Central)
  20 minutes of meditation with Celtic harp. Silent prayer and reflection following if desired, facilitated by Rev. Jean Norton. (For questions or to sign up for individual Therapeutic Harp Sessions, contact Jean at HeartSongJean@gmail.com.)
  Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/96976838422
- **Especially for Specialized Ministers**

Tuesday, April 22, 2021 - 9:30 a.m. Eastern (8:30 a.m. Central)
Zoom: https://zoom.us/j/354744689

COVID-19 Resources for In-Person Worship

The Southeast Conference website includes the latest CDC Guidelines for large gatherings and the procedures developed by several of our local churches for in-person worship: https://www.secucc.org/covid19/. However, with the recent increase in the number of COVID cases, please watch the numbers of positive tests and hospitalizations in your area as decisions are made.

Spring Storms Across the South

This Spring has already spawned several rounds of storms, with more likely. Although Conference staff seek to check in with pastors about safety and damage, we are not always aware of situations. So please do not hesitate to contact us. As clean-up happens after storms, we may have some disaster response funds that could assist members of our churches or communities. Contact Rev. Char Burch (cburch@secucc.org) or Rev. Heather Fosburgh (hfosburgh@secucc.org).

Conference Annual Meeting - June 18-19, 2021

Did you see the Annual Meeting Special Edition email we sent last week? If not, here are the highlights of how you can **participate in creating the worship experience**:

- We are seeking videos that have someone from your church saying, "We praise you, Re-Creating God."
- We also would like video clips or pictures of members of your congregation involved in mission or justice projects this past year.

The **basic schedule** is on the Annual Meeting website. Registration materials will be mailed to local churches after Easter. Materials and online registration will open April 12 through the Conference website.

New this year, we are offering **virtual advertising**. This is an opportunity for your church to celebrate or advertise during the Annual Meeting. Rates and more details are available on the website.

Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2021. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of April 4

- Open Table; Mobile, Alabama
- Susannah Davis
- Dorothea Lotze-Kola
- Matt Laney
- Stephen Sterner

- Tonya Barnett

Week of April 11

- Open Community UCC; Atlanta, Georgia
- Emmanuel UCC; Greenville, South Carolina
- Kristen Barner
- Kirk Foster
- Ellen Sims
- Bennie Liggins

Churches in Transition

First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Rush Memorial, Atlanta GA; United Church of Cookeville, Cookeville TN

News from the Wider Church

So You Want to Build a Hybrid Worship Experience?

The Indiana-Kentucky Conference is offering a two-session series and they are welcoming the wider church via YouTube live streaming. The series addresses the work of creating a worship service that is simultaneously online and in-person, without sacrificing the feeling of engagement and belonging for either type of worshipper.

- Session One: Time and Talent, premiering April 22nd at 6 pm EDT, helps you plan and prep. Find it here: https://youtu.be/9t-PFd2OsPA
- Session Two: Tools and Tech, premiering April 29th at 6 pm EDT, helps you with gadgets and go live. Find it here:

https://youtu.be/czsobF8w6KY

Watch them both during the live premiers, or return to the Indiana-Kentucky Conference YouTube channel at your convenience and get the information and help you need to plan and host a hybrid worship service. It's free!

2021 Ecumenical Advocacy Days

UCC Advocates! Register now for the virtual 2021 Ecumenical Advocacy Days, “Imagine: God’s Earth and People Restored!” This online conference to be held April 18 – 21 will include national speakers, worship, workshops, a denominational time, advocacy training, and a lobby day on legislation focused on climate justice. Register now and spread the word!

Make Plans for General Synod 2021

This year's virtual General Synod presents a significant opportunity for the UCC to join together in full participation at General Synod. This is an exciting opportunity for those who have always wanted to attend General Synod, or those curious about this gathering. Thousands of people can join in full virtual participation. We look forward to welcoming you across the miles. We will gather under the theme: Rooted in Love, July 11-18, 2021. Learn more on the General Synod website.

Meet the Speakers: Announcing two dynamic keynote speakers for General Synod. Find out more about these two individuals and the ways in which they are inspiring change.
Read the Amended Bylaws: The General Synod will consider changes to the Bylaws. Become familiar with the proposed changes.
Learn about Workshops: Workshop applications are being received for the upcoming General Synod. The deadline for applications is March 26. Learn more on the UCC website.

Third Annual Southern Conference African American Convocation

Clergy and Laity from churches across the Southeast Conference are invited to attend the Third Annual Southern Conference African American Convocation, hosted by the Southern Conference UCC. This is an online event, from Fri, Apr 16, 2021, 3:00 PM – Sat, Apr 17, 2021, 4:00 PM EDT.

The Convocation will feature dynamic preaching, biblical studies, inspiring worship, and thought-provoking workshops. This will be an all-virtual Convocation. The theme is “Moving with Praise, Prayer and Proclamation” (Acts 2:1-11). Bishop Yvette Flunder (D.Min.) of the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries will be the opening worship preacher, and Rev. Bernice Powell Jackson will be the closing preacher. John W. Kinney (Ph.D.), Dean of Virginia Union, will be guest panelist and lecturer. The registration cost is $25 and youth are free. REGISTER

Global Ministries VBS and Children's resources are available for use in your congregation

Whether you are planning a virtual, in-person, or hybrid Vacation Bible School or summer series for children and youth, consider using one of the Global Ministries curricula or resources! Global Ministries resources are a great way to engage children and youth on God's global mission and to learn more about church partners and their ministries around the world. Each curriculum or resource includes ideas for ways to engage children and youth in God's global mission today - such as activities and games, music, learning how to cook favorite dishes from around the world, and giving opportunities for current projects of global partners. To browse a list of several current projects supporting children and youth around the world, find them here. Find all of the Global Ministries curricula and resources for children and youth, here.

UCC and People's Justice Council now finalists for climate justice award

by Hans Holznagel, UCC National Staff Writer

The Peoples Justice Council, organized by our own Rev. Michael Malcom, and the United Church of Christ have won $10,000 for working together on climate justice. And there could be more where that came from.

The UCC and the People's Justice Council will receive the gift as a joint finalist in the 2021 American Climate Leadership Awards. Originally among 30 nominees, the UCC and the PJC got the news March 15 from contest sponsor ecoAmerica. They join nine other finalists from many sectors of society — and are the only joint finalist.

At the end of the contest, a winner will receive $50,000. A runner-up will win $25,000. EcoAmerica will name those two on April 27 during its annual, three-day American Climate Leadership Summit.

FEMA to Help Pay Funeral Costs for COVID-19-related Deaths

In early April, FEMA will begin providing financial assistance for funeral expenses incurred after Jan. 20, 2020 for deaths related to coronavirus (COVID-19) to help ease some of the financial stress and burden caused by the pandemic. The policy was recently finalized and FEMA is now moving rapidly to implement this funeral assistance program nationwide. More information is available on the FEMA website.

Trainings and Conferences

Healthy Boundaries 101 and 201 Offered

The training sessions are offered Fridays from 2:45 pm-6:15 pm, and Saturdays from 8:45 am-12:15 pm. You must attend both sessions in order for the training to count toward Authorization Requirements for Ordained, Licensed, and Commissioned Ministers. The sessions will be held **April 30-May 1**, **June 4-5**, **September 18-19**, and **November 5-6**. You will need to pick which of the sessions you want to attend. The fee is $75. You can either pay online at https://www.secucc.org/giving/donate/. Choose "other donation" and be sure to list Healthy Boundary Training on the line provided. Alternatively, you can send a check to the Southeast Conference at PO Box 1950, Decatur GA 30031. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Rev. Heather Fosburgh at hfosburgh@secucc.org or call 404-719-6572.

Conference Calendar

April 6 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

April 8 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT
Board of Directors Meeting

April 13 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

April 15 @ 12:00 pm - 12:30 pm EDT
Live Harp Meditations for Ministers

April 15 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT
Commission on Ministry Meeting

April 20 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

April 26 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EDT
Re-Opening of Churches – Conversation for all Church Leaders

April 27 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT
Clergy Conversations via Zoom

April 30 @ 1:45 pm - May 1 @ 1:45 pm EDT
Healthy Boundaries 101: Fundamentals

View the **full calendar** of events online: https://www.secucc.org/events/

Contact Us

Conference Minister: **Rev. Char Burch;** cburch@secucc.org

Assoc. Conf. Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh;** hfosburgh@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss;** cmoss@secucc.org

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